

**Office of Commonwealth Preparedness:
Status of Recommendations of the January 5, 2006
Report of the Policy Transition Committee
On Commonwealth Preparedness**

Committee on Commonwealth Preparedness

Introduction

On January 5, 2006 the Office of the Governor-Elect Committee on Commonwealth Preparedness prepared and provided to the Governor a report containing numerous recommendations for improving the Commonwealth preparedness. The Committee assumed that future disasters both man made and natural would occur within the Commonwealth. The Committee also assumed that regional planning and funding for state emergency organizations were critical to Commonwealth preparedness.

The Committee identified many high level areas of focus including the need to enhance collaboration, coordination and communications between government organizations, the private sector and the public of the Commonwealth. The Committee recognized that collaboration and coordination of preparedness and response responsibilities across organizations is essential and that inhibiting systems must be replaced. The Committee further recommended improving communications including improved public knowledge of Commonwealth capabilities during emergencies, establishing a statewide citizen's alert system and examining the role of public-private partnerships in emergency planning and implementation. The Committee recommended that in order to enhance collaboration and coordination that consideration be given to making the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness overall responsible for "Preparedness Organization" as described in the National Incident Management System and for the primary state level organizations for emergency preparedness activities.

The Committee provided further guidance that standards be developed to define threat levels that would precipitate Executive branch authorities including invoking marshal law; developing lessons learned and best practices that borrow from the experience of other states and the federal government; review and consideration of the suggestions made by the September 2005 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission; address discrete issues concerning health hazards such as first responder identification, impact on the special needs community and pandemic quarantines.

The Committee concluded by recommending that the Governor develop a system that provides a Commonwealth wide view while at the same time recognizing that first responders will begin reporting and taking action at the local level. The Committee recommended consideration for simultaneously moving forward in reviewing the work of the Secure Commonwealth Panel to determine which recommendations can be promptly adopted and the formation of a Blue Ribbon panel to analyze the existing Virginia system and give recommendations for improvement.

The Committee report contained eight issue areas each with multiple recommendations and/or goals. The eight areas are as follows:

1. Health and Medical Emergency Preparedness and Support Services
2. State Planning and Coordination
3. Improve Commonwealth Relationships with the Private Sector
4. Local Issues: Pre and Post
5. Communications: Public Safety Communications Operability and Interoperability
6. Preparedness: Education and Training
7. Capitol Region
8. Hampton Roads

This report will address the issue areas outlined within the Committee report and provide a current status of the recommendations and goals. The current status will be indicated by a green, yellow or red indicator by the recommendation or goal. These indicators will correspond to the following assessments:

Green this recommendation and/or goal has been substantially met and is either complete or in a steady state for ongoing initiatives.

Yellow this recommendation and/or goal has been partially met with continued activities required.

Red this recommendation and/or goal was not met either by executive decision and/or dependency on activities outside the control of the Executive Branch.

Health and Medical Emergency Preparedness and Support Services

- Ensure public health and healthcare surge capacity
 - Continue to support increased hospital surge capacity (Bed tracking)
 - Support and if possible expand, the trauma system in Virginia (Enhanced collaboration and coordination, Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC))
- Ensure the ability to provide mass prophylaxis with medications or vaccines
 - Continue ability to manage the Strategic National Stockpile (Ongoing, highest rating maintained)
 - Incorporate mass dispensing efforts into specific plans (Done, plan being enacted now as part of H1N1)
- Mental health support of responders, providers and the public
 - Support mental health planning and response at least 18-24 months beyond event (Not funded, if a National Emergency is declared funding could be available via the Stafford Act)
- Mortality management
 - Develop state mortuary response team and disaster portable mortuary unit (Response capability established Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTS), no mobile unit but have identified regional locations, e.g. climate controlled seedling facility with Department of Forestry)
 - Develop private public partnership to plan for body recovery and preservation (Have significant public private relationships, medical reserve corps)
 - Develop MOUs with federal agencies acknowledging Virginia jurisdiction in Virginia (Very good working relationships, EMAC)
 - Develop single interoperable computer system for missing persons and unidentified body parts (This is not cost effective and if needed the services could be requested from the Federal Government and/ or other States such as New York)
 - Develop policies for testing fragmented remains and unclaimed hazardous remains (This is not cost effective and if needed the services could be requested from the Federal Government and/or other States such as New York)
 - Develop a family assistance center that will work with the OCME to provide services and support to families (Plans in place but needs additional refinement and has not yet been tested)
- Ensure the ability to respond to all infectious disease outbreaks and other hazards
 - Provide surveillance and investigation capability for a broad range of infectious diseases, chemical and radiological hazards (Unidentified substance protocol developed, Fusion Center)
 - Establish and maintain surveillance systems statewide (Fusion Center)
 - Maintain laboratory capability to identify and monitor chemical and biological hazards (State Laboratory)
 - Cross agency approach to respond and handle suspicious substances (Protocol established, Fusion Center)
 - Enhance public information and outreach for a broad range of threats (Ready VA, Health Alert System, Health Letter of the Week)

- Increase public/private collaboration in health planning and response activities ■
 - Enhance collaboration between VDH and hospitals and healthcare professionals ■
(Ongoing close collaboration as highlighted with H1N1, Health Alert, Health Letter of the Week)
 - Address concerns related to private healthcare providers when responding to emergencies (credentialing, liability) ■
(EMAC, legislative changes to protect volunteers)
- Enhance recruitment and training of volunteers ■
 - Support localities in the development of local medical reserve corps ■
(31 local Medical Reserve Corps with over 10K volunteers)
- Mass care and special needs populations ■
 - Establish collaborative planning for all needs population with Red Cross, VDH, Department of Social Services, etc. ■
(Done, State Emergency Plan)
 - Ensure state and locality evacuation and sheltering plans address all needs population ■
(Done, plans in place)
 - Be certain that localities have policies to address visitors during emergencies ■
(Done, plans in place for refugees of last resort)
- Isolation/quarantine issues (including services in home) ■
 - Ensure policies are in place at the local level concerning implementing mass isolation and/or quarantine ■
(Done, new legislation passed)
 - Ensure policies are in place to enforce isolation and/or quarantine ■
(Done, has been tested e.g. virtual courtrooms)
- Ensure adequate funding for all public health and medical preparedness and response activities ■
 - Advocate for increased federal funding for public health and emergency preparedness ■
(Ongoing, coordinated grant requests)
 - Consider the need to increase state funding for public health, healthcare, preparedness and response activities ■
(Ongoing, subject to availability of funds)

State Planning and Coordination ■

- Continue to coordinate all agencies with a role in incident management ■
(VERT, Regional Coordinators)
- Revise the Commonwealth of Virginia Coordination Emergency Operations Plan ■
(The plan was revised)
- Establish roles for the Secretariats during all the phases of emergency management ■
(Done COVEOP revised, COOP and COG)
- Intelligence Fusion Center ■
 - Create a central information fusion center ■
(Established Fusion Center)
 - Receive, review , analyze and disseminate information from a wide range of sources ■
(Fusion Center, Virginia Interoperability Picture for Emergency Response (VIPER))

Improve Commonwealth relationships with the private sector for preparedness ■

- Ensure effective management of the public/private collaborative process ■
(Business and Industry Sub-Panel, Ready Virginia, Virginia Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan)
- The private sector should be an integral component of the Commonwealth preparedness planning and response ■
(Business and Industry Sub-Panel, Ready Virginia, Virginia Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan)
- Improve communications between the public and private sectors on security and preparedness ■
(Business and Industry Sub-Panel, Ready Virginia, Virginia Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan)
- Improve public/private coordination on critical infrastructure planning and exercises ■
(Virginia Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan, COOP)
- Increase the sharing of critical information with the private sector ■
(Fusion Center, VIPER)
- Public and private sector agreement on which areas of critical infrastructure need the most improvement in emergency preparedness ■
(Broad agreement NIP has several private sector leads e.g. energy, rail, pipelines)
- Critical infrastructure protection between government and private sector ■
 - Receipt of and analysis of intelligence, law enforcement and other information in order to identify and communicate potential threats ■
(Fusion Center)
 - Engage the private sector in the development of technologies for detecting, preventing against terrorist attacks using chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or related weapons and materials ■
(Ongoing, DHS grants)
 - Development of a comprehensive plan for securing resources and critical infrastructures ■
(Virginia Critical Infrastructure Plan)
 - Development of a disaster recovery plan for facilities, employees and the citizenry ■
(Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP))
 - Development and testing of scenarios for conducting of drills ■
(Ongoing, DHS Exercise and Evaluation)
- Transportation between government and private sector ■
 - Secure the borders, territorial waters, ports and land, land sea and air transportation systems of the state and the nation ■
(State seaports security, close coordination with the Federal Government, OCP sits on Area Maritime Security Committee, VA Department of Aviation for smaller airports)
 - Prevent the importation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and material ■
(State seaports security, close coordination with the Federal Government, OCP sits on Area Maritime Security Committee, VA Department of Aviation for smaller airports)
 - Ensure the speed, orderly and efficient resumption of traffic and commerce ■
(Port restoration plan, Transportation Emergency Plan)
 - Identify and support alternate transportation systems in the event of the disruption of one or more modes of transportation ■
(Transportation Emergency Plan)
- Improve education and training of private industry regarding disaster preparedness and response ■

- Push technology needs to be implemented to get information to private industry ■
(Ready Virginia)
- Industry needs to put emergency preparedness plans in place ■
(Format provided, development of plans encouraged)
- Regional preparedness needs to be communicated to the areas affected ■
(Regional Preparedness Advisory Committees)
- Private industry needs to increase awareness of cyber security ■
(Information provided, e.g. Cyber Security Week)
- Communications and technology/information sharing between government and private sector ■
 - The state needs to complete the development of a web site for emergency information relating to preparedness and necessary action in case of an emergency ■
(Ready Virginia)
 - Implement web based technology that will allow the Commonwealth to develop a multi channel inbound/outbound system that will pull information from a central web site ■
(WebEOC, VIPER)
 - Develop a web based method for the private sector to identify their preferred method of being contacted for both general information and emergency notifications ■
(Ready Virginia)
 - Develop a well planned educational program to make the private sector and the citizenry aware that the alert system is available ■
(Ready Virginia)
 - Create the needed cultural change so that government and the private sector will collaborate for the betterment of the citizens of the Commonwealth ■
(Ready Virginia “Culture of Preparedness”, OCP)

Local Issues: Pre and Post Subcommittee ■

- Lack of a shared vision across organizations ■
 - Restructure the Commonwealth’s Department of Fire Programs, Office of Medical Services, State Fire Marshal and Department of Emergency Management functions into one agency ■
(This was not done by executive decision)
 - Long term codified commitment to the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness ■
(Office of Commonwealth Preparedness (OCP) established in statute)
- Funding ■
 - Stop redirecting the growth of the Fire Programs Fund to non-fire related services ■
(There is no statutory requirement for departments to report in Virginia. Reporting is completely voluntary with 92% reporting in 2008 and 86% reporting in 2009)
 - Support the match for Fire Programs Fund introduced by Governor Warner ■
(Requested but not funded)
 - Permanently establish the match for funds by codifying it into law ■
(Requested but not funded)
 - Stop redirecting funds from the Four-for-Life Fund to non-emergency services ■
(Not done in 2009, \$1M was redirected for State Police aviation)
 - Review and possible implementation of the September 2005 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission report recommendations ■

(This is related to the consolidation of VDFP, OEMS and VDEM; this was not done by executive decision)

- Continue to provide matching funds for the federal grant program, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) (In 2006, \$250K was provided; there has been no matching funds allocated since then)
- No fire department in Virginia currently meets the Safe Staffing Standard (NFPA 1710). Encourage localities to improve this via SAFER (There is no state requirement mandating compliance with NFPA 1710 (Career) and NFPA 1720 (Volunteer); the Virginia program has however been responsible for 80,000 nationally recognized certifications since 2005)
- Training
 - Forge a strong permanent relationship between the VCCS, VDFP, OEMS and VDEM (CPWG)
 - Consolidate VDFP, OEMS and VDEM under on Secretariat (This was not done by executive decision)
 - The VCCS would be responsible for academic curricula and the state training department would be utilized for hands on skills (This was not done by executive decision)
 - Virginia should avail itself to the free accredited training that meets national standards which is being delivered by public and private contractors funded through federal grant programs (Ongoing, incentives to provide training for Virginia Community College System (VCCS))
- Pre and post critical incident first responder health and documentation issues
 - Compel every public safety employer to use a standardized method of screening employees to establish baseline health and a DNA databank should be established for first responders (This was not deemed cost efficient, not within legal authority)
 - Establish a master injury/exposure report form to document any incident where a first responder either suffers exposure and/or injury (Existing OSHA/OWCP process)
 - Appoint a Health, Hardship and Safety Officer at an executive level to quickly coordinate the request for assistance from localities where first responders are overwhelmed (Legislation to create introduced in last two years)
 - The Workers Compensation Act must be overhauled with a process for the speedy processing of mass injury and/or death of public safety employees (Existing OSHA/OWCP process)
 - The Commonwealth should consider the implementation of a second tier of emergency response other than a declaration of a state emergency (Existing state law provides for multiple tiers of response)

Communications: Public Safety Communications Operability and Interoperability

- Statewide alerting network: notification to responders and citizens
 - Develop a statewide alerting network to provide information to first responders and localities (State Interoperability Strategic Plan)
 - Provide a statewide citizen alerting application to provide information to citizens (Ready Virginia)
 - Develop a partnership with commercial wireless vendors to explore methods of establishing an automatic subscription to the notification process (It was not deemed feasible to develop a automatic subscription service across the board; some

sectors such as public health have established multiple means of relaying information e.g. fax, email, phone)

- Develop a statewide website that will facilitates community/regional coordination in the aftermath of an emergency or disaster (Ready Virginia, WebEOC)
- Statewide situational awareness: implementation of WebEOC
 - Develop a statewide strategy/policy between the commonwealth and localities in the access and use of WebEOC (Implemented)
 - Provide training and support the implementation of WebEOC at state and local levels (Implemented)
 - Continue to actively participate in the Capitol Wireless Integrated Network(CapWIN) and explore opportunities where local government/agencies may benefit from mobile data (Implemented)
- Virginia geographic information network (VGIN): expand use to state and local levels
 - Identify specific areas where state and local public safety may access and use the VGIN information in mapping to enhance their ability to provide public safety (VIPER)
 - Explore the availability, awareness and use of the VGIN information into Virginia's deployment of WebEOC (VIPER)
 - Mapping should be available to capture critical infrastructure assets from which specific interests can be generated in a timely fashion (VIPER)
- Virginia fusion center: expand information sharing to state and local government and public safety
 - Include local representation in the development of the Virginia Statewide Fusion Center to provide (Implemented)
 - Explore and determine the best methods to build relationships of trusts and credibility across all disciplines (Virginia Information Sharing Working Group (VISWG))
 - Explore expansion of state information sharing into the federal programs (VISWG)
 - Utilize statewide alerting network/application to provide timely information sharing (Statewide Alert Network (SWAN))

Preparedness: Education and Training

- Specify priority threat scenarios to guide planning and preparation (COOP, COVEOP)
- Develop/promote locality specific, threat based multi jurisdictional action plans (Regional Planner, Regional Planning Working Group(s) (RPWG))
- Aggressive education programs
 - That provide an understanding of salient threats (Ready Virginia)
 - The roles and responsibilities of relevant government agencies and private threats (Ready Virginia)

- The actions that individuals must be able to take in the event of a disaster (Ready Virginia)
- Promote understanding within our least advantaged communities (All needs population addressed in distribution, multiple languages used)
- Training and exercises (Ready Virginia, CERT)
- Information operations (COVEOP)
- Regions and localities have inadequate preparations and training for mass casualty events
 - Handling of remains, temporary storage, death notification addressed in the strategic plan (COVEOP)
 - Change CERT training modules to indicate proper death notification responsibilities (CERT training contains correct information)
- Priorities with a fiscal impact
 - Develop regionally and locality specific multi jurisdictional threat scenarios and action plans (Some in place, NCR, Hampton Roads, Richmond; others soon Roanoke)
 - Develop course materials that promote an in-depth understanding of organizational roles and responsibilities (Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP))
 - Implement a comprehensive Commonwealth preparedness education program (Ready Virginia)
 - Sustaining an effective training, credentialing and exercise program for first responders (National Incident Management System (NIMS), OCP is a member of the National Credentialing Working Group, approximately 2500 Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 201 cards issued in NCE with an additional 11,000 to begin being issued in Hampton Roads starting the end of December 2009).
 - Develop and implement training and orientation for spontaneous volunteers and supplementary personnel from adjacent areas during mobilization phase of the operation (Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), CERT)
 - Develop protocols for mass casualty with clearly defined jurisdictions and additional Medical Examiner office capacity (Protocols in place, 1 additional Medical Examiner funded, further MEO capacity subject to availability of funds)
- Priorities with little or no fiscal impact
 - Determine and prioritize threat scenarios
 - Determine documenting and training for individual and organizational roles and responsibilities
 - Determine documenting and training individual roles and responsibilities authority
 - Incorporate existing organizations that tend to respond to disasters into planning and training development
- The behavioral health components of disaster response are absent within the strategic plan (Current mental health training provided by Federal Department of Health and Human Services employee on loan to the State. The current term for this individual is scheduled to end in the summer of 2010)

- Provide standardized training in disaster behavioral health developed/reviewed and approved by the Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness Behavioral Health Advisory Council (TADBHAC) for:
 - Emergency and administrative officials (No funding or personnel available)
 - First responders, medical examiners, public health staff, hospital staff (No funding or personnel available)
 - Mental health agencies, centers, professional groups (some training is being done but it is limited due to funding and personnel constraints)
 - Individual providers who may serve as volunteer support providers (some training is being done but it is limited due to funding and personnel constraints)
 - Faith based groups that tend to respond to disasters (No funding or personnel available)
 - Relief agencies affiliated with disaster response work (No funding or personnel available)
 - Event personnel such as state fair workers/volunteers (No funding or personnel available)
 - Train school personnel in addressing disaster behavioral health components with students, parents and staff (No funding or personnel available)
- Incorporate behavioral health into the Commonwealth's strategic plan in a clear manner:
 - Expanding on the incorporation of behavioral health within the National Response Plan target capabilities section per recommendations of the Governor's TADBHAC (Not addressed in the Strategic plan but activities are in progress)
 - Requiring that local emergency operations plans include an all hazards regional disaster mental health plan approved by DMRMSAS disaster planning director and submitted by community service boards (Not addressed in the Strategic plan but activities are in progress)
 - Merging the pandemic plans of the VDH with local emergency operations plans and including the behavioral health components (Not addressed in the Strategic plan but activities are in progress)

Capitol Region

- There needs to be integration of state preparedness structures
 - Put one office in charge (Executive Order 44)
 - Establish a regional approach (RPWGs)
 - Establish a standards based approach (Fire Programs Standards and Assessment)
- Relationships with federal departments (including the military) and agencies must be clear
 - Local jurisdictions must be included in decision making between state and federal authorities (RPWG, integrated decision making)
 - The state needs to support localities so they can efficiently interact with federal authorities (OCP, RPWGs)
- Communication at all levels must be clear and timely

- Lines of communication and authority need to be made clear (NCR Exercise)
- Who will inform whom and when must be clear at all levels for preparedness (COVEOP)
- Who will inform whom and when must be clear at all levels of response (COVEOP)
- Public preparedness/building resilient communities
 - Simple public alert and communication systems must be set up and communicated to the public and private sector (SWAN, Campus Alert Systems)
 - Instructions about what to prepare for and how to prepare need to be developed and communicated to the public and private sector (Ready Virginia)
 - An extensive and ongoing public education campaign needs to be undertaken (Ready Virginia, CERT)
 - Develop special planning and preparation for Northern Virginia evacuation (NCR)
 - Standards for what makes a resilient community need to be developed (CERT, NIPP guide to be developed for a pilot in Hampton Roads in 2010, which will inform the final deployment and dissemination plan)

Hampton Roads

- Interagency training on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) methodologies and practices
 - Seek new avenues for NIMS ICS training among local, Commonwealth and federal first responders (Extensive system sponsored by VDEM and Fire Programs)
- Interagency maritime security exercise development and planning
 - Seek avenues to enhance the planning and coordination of exercises that could potentially involve first responders from among Commonwealth, local and federal agencies (Annual Exercises)
- Exploration and availability of security grants for improving interoperability and physical security in the maritime environment
 - Continue to support in ensuring that all potential security enhancement funding sources are understood and utilized (Fully supported)
- Improved interagency communications
 - Seek funding, hardware and technological solutions to fully integrate/improve interagency communications systems (Interoperability coordination for grants)
- Interagency maritime security planning
 - Include Coast Guard planners in the Commonwealth planning process (Implemented)
- Interagency maritime law enforcement memorandums of understanding (MOUs)

- Continue to support the development of MOUs between the Coast Guard and other local law enforcement jurisdictions ■
(MOUs for all areas almost complete)
- Intra-jurisdictional chain of command ■
 - Seek to enact legislation that strengthens the authority and expertise base of regional and State level EOC Directors ■
(All Regions required to have a Designated Emergency Manager)
- Evacuation plan for coastal region during a natural disaster ■
 - Review and revise pre-planned evacuation routes ■
(Implemented)
 - Establish/revise timelines to begin moving the masses ■
(Implemented)
 - Secure public/private transportation ■
(Implemented)
- First responder/citizen involvement ■
 - Expand the role of the first responder/citizen ■
(Medical Reserve Corps, VERT)
- Military involvement ■
 - Establish coordination between the state and local federal military agencies ■
(Virginia Military Advisory Council)
 - Plan for the families of the Hampton Roads military ■
(Extensive cooperation and coordination for on and off base)